

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAGR, ELAB, PINT, HO

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES, FERNANDO

MONTES: GOH DIVIDED ON AGRARIAN REFORM

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 2385

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN CONVERSATION WITH LABOFF JUNE 7, MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES FERNANDO MONTES CONFIRMED THAT HE IS A MEMBER OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND SAID THAT HE HAD ACCEPTED HIS MINISTRY POSITION WITH THE PARTY'S PERMISSION. MONTES ACKNOWLEDGED THE GROWING DIVISION WITHIN THE GOH ON AGRARIAN REFORM POLICY AND CONFIRMED HIS PERSONA RIVALRY WITH NATIONAL AGRARIAN INSTITUTE (INA) DIRECTOR LT. COLONEL MARIO MALDONADO. MONTES BELIEVES THAT IF THE CURRENT AGRARIAN REFORM LAW IS ENFORCED THE CAMPESINO ORGANIZATIONS (UNC AND ANACH) WILL BE DESTROYED. END SUMMARY.

1. LABOFF TALKED WITH MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES, FERNANDO MONTES, JUNE 7. MONTES HAS A LONG INVOLVEMENT WITH THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT AND THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN HONDURAS. AT THE TIME OF HIS APPOINTMENT BY MELGAR, HE WAS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FUNDHESA, THE HONDURAN DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION.

2. MONTES EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH HIS MINISTERIAL POSITION EVEN THOUGH HE HAS BEEN WORKING EXTRAORDINARILY LONG HOURS. HE SAID THAT HE HAD RECEIVED CERTAIN ASSURANCES
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AS TO HIS ROLE BY MELGAR BEFORE ACCEPTING THE POSITION WHICH CAUSED HIM TO BELIEVE THAT HE COULD ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING. HE ACKNOWLEDGED BEING A MEMBER OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND SAID THAT HE HAD RECEIVED THE PARTY'S

PERMISSION PRIOR TO ACCEPTING THE MINISTRY. MONTES HAS NOT BEEN REPLACED AT FUNDHESA WHICH IS NOW BEING ADMINISTERED BY HIS FORMER DEPUTY.

3. MONTES CLAIMED THAT HE IS THE MOST PRO-AMERICAN OF ALL THE HONDURAN CHRISTIAN-DEMOCRATS AND THAT HE BELIEVES MOST AMERICANS VIEW THE CHRISTIAN-DEMOCRATS AS COMMUNISTS. HE SAID THAT THE PARTY IS DIVIDED INTO FACTIONS RANGING FROM THE RIGHT TO THE EXTREMEM LEFT. MONTES ALSO SAID THAT THE IMPRESSION THAT HE OR THE PARTY CONTROLS THE CHRISTIAN UNION CONFEDERATION (CGT) OR THE CAMPESINO ASSOCIATION (UNC) IS INCORRECT.

4. WHEN ASKED WHAT HAD CAUSED THE CREDIT UNION COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION, FACACH, TO BE EXPELLED FROM THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN COORDINATING AGENCY, CONCORDE MONTES REPLIED THAT FACACH HAD DEVELOPED A PHILOSOPHY UNDER WHICH ITS AFFILIATES WERE OPERATING FOR A PROFIT, AN IDEA WHICH CONTRADICTS THE OPERATING PHILOSOPHY OF CONCORDE. CARITAS, THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AGENCY, HAD LEFT CONCORDE FOR OTHER REASONS. ARCHBISHOP SANTOS, THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY IN THE HONDURAN CHURCH, ACCORDING TO MONTES, IS LOYAL TO FORMER CHIEF OF STATE GENERAL LOPEZ. WHEN THE CHRISTIAN-DEMOCRATS' OPPOSITION TO LOPEZ GREW, SANTOS PULLED CARITAS OUT OF CONCORDE, EVEN THOUGH HIS NEPHEW, BENJAMIN SANTOS, IS CONCORDE'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.

5. TURNING TO ANOTHER SUBJECT, THE REPORTING OFFICER ASKED MONTES ABOUT THE STORIES CIRCULATING ABOUT A DIVISION WITHIN THE GOH ON THE QUESTION OF AGRARIAN REFORM. MONTES ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE REPORTS ARE TRUE AND MADE SEVERAL COMMENTS THAT CONFIRMED A RUNNING FIGHT WITH NATIONAL AGRARIAN INSTITUTE (INA) DIRECTOR LT. COLONEL MARIO MALDONADO.

6. MONTES SAID THAT THE EMPRESA ASOCIATIVA (ASSOCIATE ENTERPRISE) ARRANGEMENT ESTABLISHED BY THE AGRARIAN REFORM CONFIDENTIAL

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LAW WOULD DESTROYBOTH ANACH AND THE UNC, THEREFORE THE TWO CAMPESINO ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD COORDINATE ACTION TO OPPOSE THE LAW. HE SAID THAT SOONER OR LATER THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LABOR AND CAMPESINO ORGANIZATIONS OF THE CGT (GENERAL WORKER'S CENTRAL) AND THE DEMOCRATIC CTH (CONFEDERATION OF HONDURAN WORKERS) WOULD HAVE TO UNITE TO DEFEND THEIR MUTUAL INTERESTS. MONTES SAID THAT HE HAD MADE AN OFFER OF ASSISTANCE TO ANACH'S SECRETARY GENERAL, ANTONIO JULIN. HE SAID THAT JULIN WAS AN HONEST, CAPABLE AND DEDICATED CAMPESINO LEADER BUT THAT ANACH PRESIDENT REYES RODRIGUES HAD SOLD HIMSELF TO THE GOVERNMENT.

7. COMMENT: MONTES' CONFIRMATION OF THE DIVISION WITHIN

THE GOH ON AGRARIAN REFORM POLICY IS SIGNIFICANT. GIVEN HIS ADMITTED OPPOSITION TO THE EMPRESA ASOCIATIVA CONCENT AND HIS SUGGESTION THAT ANACH AND UNC SHOULD JOIN IN OPPOSITION, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT HE INTENDS TO USE CAMPESINO OPPOSITION TO THAT PORTION OF THE LAW AS THE BASIS OF HIS CAMPAIGN WITHIN THE GOH TO CHANGE THE LEGISLATION. BOTH MONTES AND HIS PARTY HAVE A REAL STAKE IN THE SURVIVAL OF THE UNC AND WILL CERTAINLY OPPOSE ANY AGRARIAN REFORM PROVISION WHICH IS VIEWED AS A THREAT. MONTES' STATEMENT THAT THE CHRISTIAN-DEMOCRATIC PARTY DOES NOT CONTROL THE CGT OR THE UNC IS SOMEWHAT DISINGENUOUS. THE PRESIDENTS OF BOTH ORGANIZATIONS ARE MEMBERS OF THE PARTY'S DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE AND THE CGT RECEIVES A SUBSIDY FROM CLAT, THE REGIONAL CHRISTIAN-DEMOCRATIC LABOR CONFEDERATION. THE "INTERLOCKING DIRECTORATES" OF THE CGT AND OTHER CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATIONS OBVIOUSLY GIVES THE PARTY A CERTAIN DEGREE OF INFLUENCE. SANCHEZ

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